In the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of efficiently serving content in a distributed computing environment that comprises a network-attached storage system having a plurality of disk drives, comprising:

receiving usage metrics for a particular stored object; and

evaluating the received usage metrics to determine whether the particular stored object is stored in an appropriate ~~location~~ one of the plurality of disk drives, and moving the ~~particular stored location~~ object to another of the plurality of disk drives if not.

2. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are received from a server.

3. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the received usage metrics are gathered by a system responsible for storing the particular stored object.

4. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are encoded in a Hypertext Transfer Protocol message header.

5. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are encoded using syntax of a markup language.

6. (Original) The method according to claim 5, wherein the markup language is HTML ("Hypertext Markup Language").

7. (Original) The method according to claim 6, wherein the syntax comprises a "META" tag using an "HTTP-EQUIV" attribute syntax.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 6, wherein the syntax comprises a "META" tag using a "NAME" attribute syntax.

9. (Original) The method according to claim 6, wherein the syntax comprises a specially-denoted comment.

10. (Original) The method according to claim 5, wherein the markup language is XML ("Extensible Markup Language").

11. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are received in response to a query for remotely-stored usage metric information.

12. (Original) The method according to claim 11, wherein the query uses a WebDAV request.

13. (Original) The method according to claim 12, wherein a response to the WebDAV request specifies usage metrics gathered by at least one server.

14. (Original) The method according to claim 4, wherein the usage metrics are encoded using one or more cookies.

15. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are encoded in a Wireless Session Protocol message header.

16. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are expected popularity values.

17. (Original) The method according to claim 16, wherein the expected popularity values are provided by a user.

18. (Original) The method according to claim 16, wherein the expected popularity values are predicted by a content management system.

19. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are received as meta-data on a file access message.

20. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

gathering usage metrics by a server; and

sending the gathered usage metrics from the server; and

wherein the received usage metrics are those sent from the server.

21. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein sending the gathered usage metrics from the server operates in response to a triggering event.

22. (Original) The method according to claim 21, wherein the triggering event comprises expiration of a timer.

23. (Original) The method according to claim 21, wherein the triggering event comprises exceeding a threshold.

24. (Original) The method according to claim 21, wherein the triggering event comprises receiving a query for the usage metrics.

25. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein gathering usage memories by a server further comprises gathering the usage metrics by analyzing an access log.

26. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein gathering usage memories by a server further comprises gathering the usage metrics by tracking access requests at the server.

27. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are expressed as a mnemonic.

28. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are expressed as a scaled number.

29. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are expressed as a percentage of access requests.

30. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are expressed as an actual number of access requests.

31. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are expressed as a ranking.

32. (Currently Amended) A system for efficiently serving content in a distributed computing environment using a network-attached storage ("NAS") system having a plurality of disk drives, comprising:

means for receiving, by a component of the NAS system, usage metrics for a particular stored object; and

means for evaluating the received usage metrics to determine whether the particular stored object is stored in an appropriate ~~location~~ one of the plurality of disk drives, and for moving the ~~particular stored location~~ object to another of the plurality of disk drives if not.

33. (Original) The system according to claim 32, further comprising:

means for gathering usage metrics by a server; and

means for sending the gathered usage metrics from the server; and

wherein the received usage metrics are those sent from the server.

34. (Currently Amended) A computer program product for efficiently serving content using a network-attached storage ("NAS") system having a plurality of disk drives, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-usable media and comprising:

computer readable program code that is configured to receive usage metrics for a particular stored object; and

computer readable program code that is configured to evaluate the received usage metrics to determine whether the particular stored object is stored in an appropriate ~~location~~ one of the plurality of disk drives, and to move the ~~particular stored location~~ object to another of the plurality of disk drives if not.

35. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim 34, further comprising:

computer readable program code that is configured to gather usage metrics by a server; and

computer readable program code that is configured to send the gathered usage metrics from the server; and

wherein the received usage metrics are those sent from the server.